

PARTNERSHIP



On March 27, 1998, an agreement was signed forming a unique new partnership dedicated to helping communities throughout the state of Washington improve their physical and cultural environments. The Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program of the National Park Service joined with the Washington Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (WASLA) to provide no-fee technical assistance to RTCA projects.



The RTCA program, a technical assistance program of the National Park Service, is committed to helping build community-driven partnerships that conserve natural and cultural resources and provide recreational opportunities at the local level.

The program does not provide financial assistance but shares the professional expertise of staff planners, landscape architects and resource specialists with local and regional conservation partners across the country. The RTCA office in Seattle serves the states of Idaho, Oregon and Washington.

The mission of the American Society of Landscape Architects is to lead, to educate and to participate in the careful stewardship, wise planning and artful design of our cultural and natural environments. Landscape architects strive to realize a balance among preservation, use and management of the country's resources.

Members of WASLA have volunteered their skills, individually and as part of the organization's community stewardship program, to many projects throughout the state, such as neighborhood playgrounds and gardens, environmental education centers and Habitat for Humanity houses.

This second RTCA/WASLA partnership project came together at Liberty Lake in 1999, and both organizations look forward to working with many other Washington communities — east and west, urban, suburban and rural — in the coming years.

For more information, please contact:

Rivers, Trails and
Conservation Assistance,
National Park Service
909 First Avenue,
Seattle, WA 98104
(206) 220-4113

Washington Chapter,
American Society of
Landscape Architects
1916 Pike Place #1250
Seattle, WA 98101-1097
(206) 443-9484

COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE
PARTNERSHIP

LIBERTY LAKE



1999

National Park Service
Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance
Program
...
Seattle, Washington



American Society of
Landscape Architects
...
Washington State
Chapter



COMMUNITY
ASSISTANCE
PARTNERSHIP

c/o



COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE



Neighborhoods, small towns, and community and regional groups sometimes face planning or design challenges that they are unable to meet due to a lack of expertise, direction, funding, or other resources. This new venture between the National Park Service and the Washington Chapter of

the American Society of Landscape Architects gives communities a chance to benefit from the pairing of RTCA's organizational resources with the technical skills of WASLA's landscape architects.

RTCA and WASLA, in cooperation with community members, organize an event or series of events to generate ideas and potential solutions to the local challenges. One of the most effective vehicles for producing ideas with limited time and resources is often the design charette.

A charette is generally an intensive, "illustrated brainstorming session" involving any number of people and lasting from a few hours to a few days. It is a tradition dating from the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris (in the early 20th Century), where professors would send a cart (**charrette**) around to pick up students' work at the submission deadline. Some students, frantic to complete their drawings, would jump onto the cart as it rolled down the street, hence, working "**en charrette.**"

During a charette, volunteer design professionals work to quickly grasp local problems and devise (and illustrate) solutions. The image of frenetic, last-minute drawing is common to today's charettes, which some describe as "organized chaos." The objective is high creativity and productivity. This intensity and confusion often yields fertile ideas that might not emerge in a slower, more controlled process.



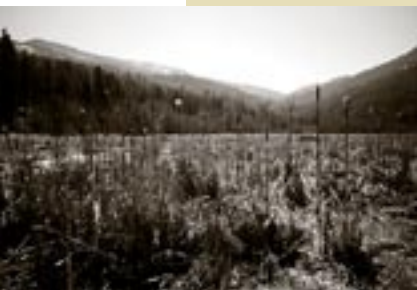
The ideas generated during a charette are often presented back to the community in a public forum of some kind. No idea is discarded due to impracticality or disputable details — these decisions are for the community to make later, after the dust of the event has settled.

Come see how the RTCA/WASLA charette process worked for one Washington community...



CONNECTING OUR PAST AND FUTURE

A COMMUNITY DESIGN EVENT — LIBERTY LAKE, WASHINGTON



In the Spokane Valley, two miles from the Idaho border, the community of Liberty Lake hosted the second charette organized by the RTCA and WASLA. Over a three-day weekend in April 1999, twenty-three volunteer landscape architects, engineers, and interpreters (coordinated by RTCA staff members Bryan Bowden, Alexandra Stone* and Evelyn Swimmer,* and WASLA representative Frank Ide*), worked with community members to produce a conceptual trail plan for Liberty Lake. The rapidly growing non-incorporated community of 5,500 people is expected to double in size over the next several years. Community leaders recognize a need to plan and develop a community-wide pathway and trail system before development pressures make it too late.



Liberty Lake, a destination resort in the early part of this century, is blessed with a 640-acre glacial lake in its midst and the Spokane River along its northern boundary. The mountains to the east are covered with evergreens while the foothills to the west give way to natural grasses, flowering shrubs, and wildflowers. Residents of the area enjoy an abundance of wildlife, birds, and the lake's trout, bass and walleye. The Spokane Centennial Trail, an existing trail which provides a continuous east-west trail route between Spokane and Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, runs along the Spokane River.



Along with several high tech businesses and the two fabricating companies in Liberty Lake, businesses in the area are expanding rapidly. The community is an urban growth area with attractive homes and three golf courses. Many residents work near where they live and some bike or walk to work. Also, commuters use the Centennial Trail to bike to work from the Spokane Valley and the City of Spokane.

In February 1999, the Liberty Lake Trails Committee distributed a survey to residents, who provided information about their favorite places and forms of recreation, and what path, trail, and park features are desired. High on the list were connections to Centennial Trail along the Spokane River, to shopping and schools, and to the 5,000 acre Liberty Lake County Park at the south end of the lake. With several key issues and physical challenges to face, the community design charette was the perfect forum to look at the big picture and generate realistic solutions.

A Friday afternoon tour of Liberty Lake for all design team members launched the weekend followed by a sumptuous dinner hosted by a member of the community. After dinner a town meeting was held where community experts presented survey results, historical perspectives, background on the local trail effort and an overview of the charette process. Community members offered additional ideas to the teams.

“It was amazing to see landscape architects working seamlessly [together] when first getting involved with the community. But, by the end of the charette, I was impressed to see community members speaking the same language as the designers and thinking in terms of creative design solutions.”

— Tim Gavin, ASLA, Taylor Landscape Architects

* denotes ASLA Members

THE RESULTS OF THE LIBERTY LAKE TRAILS CHARETTE are a valuable tool, not only for the community of Liberty Lake, but for Spokane County as a whole. The Trail Master Plan and implementation strategies that came out of the charette are expected to be adopted by Spokane County and incorporated into its Comprehensive Park Plan and Transportation Plan, which are now being updated as part of on-going growth management efforts. Inclusion in these plans gives the Liberty Lake trail projects a chance to compete for funding as the County prioritizes projects.

Following the charette, the Liberty Lake community earned unanimous County approval to establish itself as a Transportation Benefit District. This designation will enable the community to assess a property tax on themselves, with the money collected being used for both physical development of the trail plan and as matching funds for future grants. The recommendations and drawings developed during the charette will support up-coming grant applications.

Within several weeks of the charette, results of the design event were presented to Spokane County Planning and Public Works officials and the Washington State Department of Transportation. These agencies are forming strategies to incorporate several key element of the Liberty Lake Trail Plan into current projects, notably overpass improvements on Interstate 90 for connections between Liberty Lake and the Spokane Centennial Trail.

The Liberty Lake trails project was borne by the enthusiasm of a community. This enthusiasm quickly spread through the volunteer design teams who expanded on the vision of the community and translated this vision into a wonderful tool - one that lead to the realization of connecting Liberty Lake to its past and to its future.



Early Saturday morning the teams rolled-up their sleeves and began working together. Three teams were formed, each with a range of design expertise. A fourth team focused on interpretation and education and were charged with creating an interpretive plan for the entire path and trail system. Community members on each team shared their local and historical views. Initially, the teams worked up three comprehensive trail network schemes, which were discussed and combined into a composite plan. That plan was divided into three sections, one for each team to develop in greater detail. The interpretation team explored a range of techniques for telling the story Liberty Lake's natural and cultural history. During the day, team members revisited specific sites for further ideas and information.



To highlight the charette weekend, the community held a bike rodeo and tree planting event that took place outside the elementary school where the design teams were working. Several community members visited the charette rooms during the day, some even offering suggestions and gratitude to the teams. Many design team volunteers worked on ideas and presentation materials well into the evening and early Sunday morning. Throughout the weekend, meals and snacks kept arriving on the scene, provided by generous residents, restaurants and markets.



At noon on Sunday, the community gathered for the open house and presentations, where each team revealed an array of colorful illustrative plans, detail and section drawings, perspective sketches, and even a model of a possible artifact exhibit. The presentations addressed a proposed trail network, as well as destination areas for events, outdoor classrooms and recreation facilities. Interpretive opportunities and sites were shown as an integral part of the trail plan. The teams demonstrated abundant opportunities, but also the constraints that the community needs to explore before development decisions are made.



For the first time Liberty Lake residents were able to see a comprehensive approach to their desired network of pathways and trails. Many showed amazement at the many innovative ideas for solving what previously appeared to be insurmountable problems. These included how to cross a major highway to reach the Centennial Trail; cross a wetland area to create a loop trail around the lake; and use periodically flooded land for an outdoor classroom. One resident exclaimed, “Fabulous! This is the only place I have lived where it looks like growth will improve the community.” The teams felt a deep satisfaction when one community leader stood and stated, “No dust will gather on these ideas. I guarantee you that Liberty Lake will move ahead on this.”



“This forum has been the most productive partnership I’ve been involved in my 20 years of service. It placed local citizens, public agencies and design professionals shoulder to shoulder to achieve a product beneficial to all.”

— Pat Harper, Spokane County Transportation Engineering Supervisor

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